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People's Reporter

A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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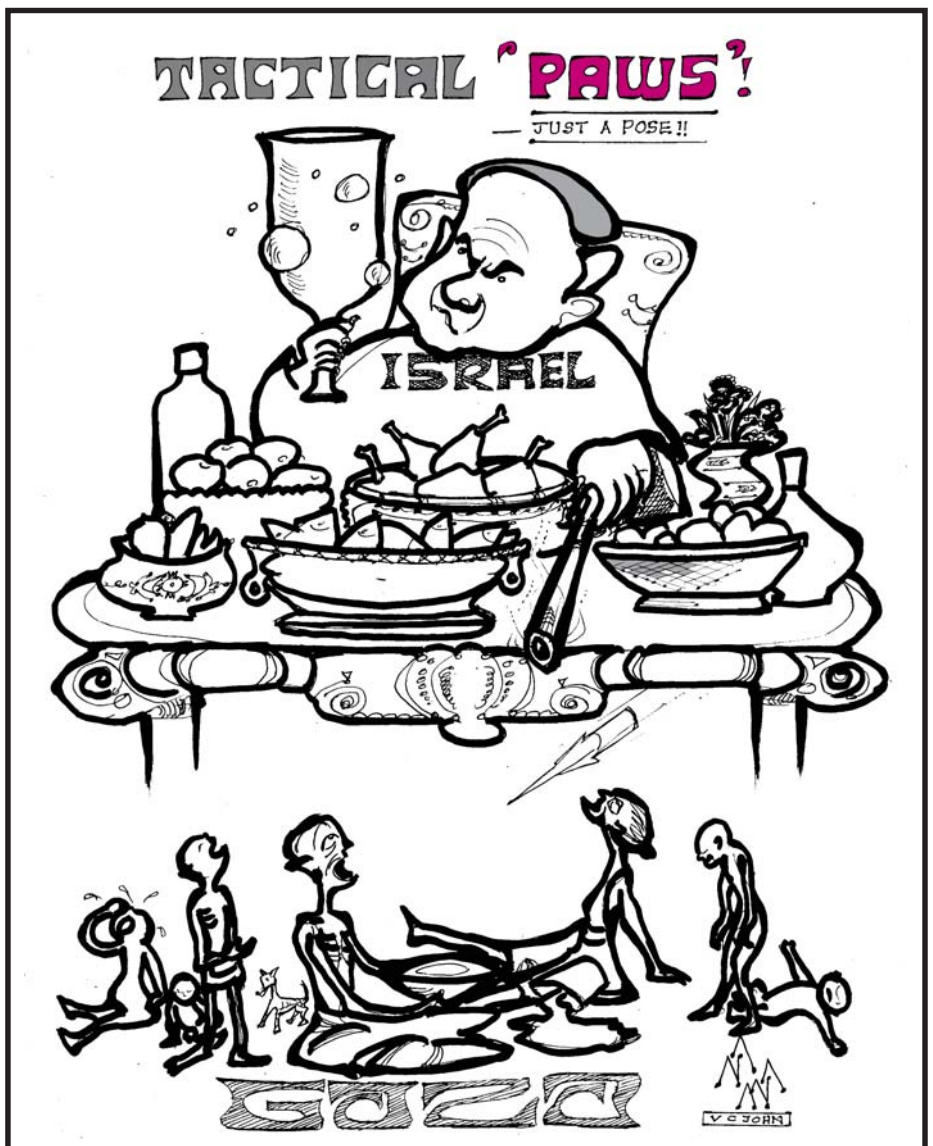

ISRAEL BEGINS A DAILY PAUSE FOR 10 HOURS IN FIGHTING IN 3 POPULATED AREAS IN GAZA
– NEWS

As Gaza faces starvation

global religious voices call for immediate aid and respect for human life

As hunger spreads across Gaza, faith leaders are expanding and amplifying the call for the suffering to end.

A street in Gaza *Photo: DSPR MECC*

An ever-growing number of appeals are coming in the wake of a World Health Organisation (WHO) report that large sections of Gaza's population are now experiencing starvation. More than 400 rabbis signed a letter urging the Israeli government to allow aid into Gaza, halt settler violence, and pursue peace.

Jewish leaders from around the world are calling on Israel to respect all innocent life. The letter urges the Israeli government to permit the entry of "extensive humanitarian aid into Gaza under international supervision, while guarding against control or theft by Hamas."

Israel stopped aid deliveries to Gaza in early March following a two-month ceasefire, citing factors including Hamas stealing the aid supply.

The letter cites "the sanctity of life" and core Torah values, including the belief that "every person is created in God's image" and the commandment to "treat every human being justly."

The letter also refers to violence in the West Bank. The rabbis have called on Israeli authorities to "use the forces of law and order to end settler violence on the West Bank and vigorously investigate and prosecute settlers who harass and assault Palestinians."

The letter describes "the severe limitation placed on humanitarian relief in Gaza" and "the policy of withholding of food, water, and medical supplies from a needy civilian population" as being in conflict with Jewish values.

"Repeated statements of intention and actions by ministers in the Israeli government, by some officers in the Israeli army, and the behaviour of criminally violent settler groups in the West Bank, often with police and military support, have been major factors in bringing us to this crisis," reads the letter.

The letter urges political dialogue, calling for "open channels of dialogue together with international partners to lead toward a just settlement, ensuring security for Israel, dignity and hope for Palestinians, and a viable peaceful future for all the region."

Pierced by wounds of war

Speaking after the recitation of the Angelus Prayer on Sunday 27 July, Pope Leo XIV said that he was following with deep concern the extremely grave

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World Council of Religions for Peace

Interreligious dialogue is not a luxury but an inexorable necessity

On 29 July, His Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew delivered the keynote address at a World Council of Religions for Peace gathering in Constantinople, addressing pressing global challenges and emphasizing the spiritual foundation necessary for overcoming them.

Speaking in a city "whose stones still bear the echo of centuries where the *oecumene* was defined not as a geographical expanse but as a spiritual horizon," His All Holiness highlighted the Ecumenical Patriarchate's role as a witness to Orthodox Christianity's universal calling. He identified the underlying crisis facing humanity as not merely economic instability or technological advancement but a "dominant, usually unavowed, worldview"—a reductive materialism that ignores the sacred dimension essential to human flourishing.

He cited Saint Gregory of Nyssa, saying: "It is impossible for anyone to

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People's Reporter
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Dowry deaths, shattering civilization

According to the Dowry Prohibition Act passed by the Parliament of India in 1961, the practice of giving or taking dowry in connection with marriage is illegal and punishable. However, this practice has been continuing. What is more disturbing is that, deaths of women by suicide after marriage owing to harassment for dowry by the husbands or in-laws and even killing of women who fail to meet the demands of husbands, have become rampant across the country. Such dowry deaths take place in poor, middle-class and rich families.

Some dowry deaths reported in the last three months are terribly disturbing - In Aligarh in Utter Pradesh, a woman died after a hot iron was pressed against parts of her body. Another woman from Utter Pradesh's Pilibhit was burned alive allegedly after she and her family did not meet the repeated demands for dowry. In Chandigarh, a young bride died by suicide allegedly owing to dowry harassment. In Tamil Nadu, near Ponneri, a woman died by suicide just four days after her wedding. Another woman from Tirupur took away her life, within two months of marriage. In Kerala, the husband kept a poisonous snake in the bed of his wife with the help of a snake chamar while she was asleep, and she died due to snake bite. These are only a few incidents.

As per the reports of the National Crimes Records Bureau (NCRB), in the 2017 - 2022 period, every year an average 7,000 dowry deaths took place. It goes without saying that these were only reported cases, and several incidents go unreported. What is more alarming is that investigations into these deaths are slow, and convictions very few. Of the 7000 dowry deaths reported every year on an average, only around 4500 were charge-sheeted by the police. There is, clearly, inordinate delay in filing the charge-sheet. Very low rate in conviction is the other side of the reality. As per reports, of the average 6500 cases sent for trial every year, only around 100 are convicted.

Dowry was the main reason behind over 6100 murders across India during the 2007-2022 period. Over 60% of these murders were recorded in West Bengal, Odisha and Bihar. Cases from these three states and Jharkhand, and those in Utter Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana constituted 80% of all dowry deaths, filed during that period. The widespread belief that this inhuman practice prevails only in rural areas and among the poor, is wrong. The records show that dowry deaths are rampant in big cities and among the rich too. Among the 19 cities in India for which data is available, 30% of all the dowry death cases were filed in Delhi and 14% in Kanpur during the period referred to above. Bengaluru, Lucknow, Patna, Jaipur, Ghaziabad, Hyderabad, Indore and Mumbai are the other cities where dowry deaths are high.

Persistence of the practice of dowry, and dowry deaths, in spite of the legislation against that, is awfully shameful for a country that boasts about economic, educational and technological achievements and global leadership. More than a crime, it is an assault on human dignity and civilisation.

Thought for the Fortnight

Any young man,
who makes dowry a condition to marriage
discards his education and his country
and dishonours womanhood.

– Mahatma Gandhi

Jubilee Vision for Social Reconstruction

A Biblical Exploration for Democracy, Justice and Peace

M. Mani Chacko

As people of faith, our task is to reconnect with the scriptural paradigms like that of the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee Year. All three speak of justice that includes rest for the land and those who work in the land, for animals and even for the wild beasts. Concern for our environment cannot be divorced from our economic concerns, for it is the omnipresent drive for profit that continues to propel us all toward the precipice of ecological collapse. The ecological and economic changes necessary for the continuation of life on this planet will ultimately require a powerful spiritual vision such as the Biblical Jubilee. In essence, the "Jubilee Vision" presents a radical blueprint for a society characterized by fairness, compassion, and shared prosperity, offering enduring principles for building a more just, democratic and peaceful world.

[Second and concluding part of the article 'Jubilee Vision for Social Transformation: A Biblical Exploration for Democracy, Justice and Peace]

D. The Practice of Jubilee Today

To celebrate jubilee today means that we make the links between what happens to people today and the concepts the Biblical jubilee stood for. Slaves were to be set free.

What are our contemporary forms of slavery? The market economy has turned people into commodities. The global trade in children for labour and the entertainment industries, is a horrendous form of slavery. The rampant abuse of women in the home through spouse violence or in cultures which deny their personal development are versions of slavery. Women's unvalued and unquantified labour in the home is slavery. The violence in our societies enslaves the mentality of men and keeps them chained to wrongful actions.

The poor are under constant slavery due to lack of education, shelter, water, health care, food and for a large majority, the right to decide their destiny. The gap between the rich and the poor is another dilemma. A nation cannot be liberated if half of its inhabitants are exploited by culture, class, patriarchal values or by gender biases. Only when people are secure from abuse and enjoy the rights to political, economic, social, cultural and religious freedom can we find joy and the right to celebrate a jubilee.

One of the most difficult issues of the jubilee is the concept of land ownership. The idea of returning the land to the original owners will forever be a problem, for in most parts of our

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world today who can claim to be the original landowner?

We live in a world in which war has become the order of the day. Millions of lives are lost senselessly, either on the front lines of war zones or through the by-products of war, such as landmines, hunger, disease and destitution. Is not God the owner of the world? **Is it not possible to pursue the path of co-existence as an interpretation of jubilee?** History and current affairs tell us that it is only when the Israelis and Palestinians, or people of Russia and Ukraine talk of co-existence in God's land that some progress on their particular issues can be made. Our future is at risk if we do not embrace the philosophy of co-existence.

We need to have a vision and a hope for what the future will be. Our visions can be shaped by exploring what might be available in structures of mutuality and participation, as opposed to structures in which the few govern the many and own and control the resources of the earth. Our task is to transform attitudes and move from hierarchy (power over) to the empowerment of people. People are empowered through education, free speech, having food, shelter, water and good health. People are empowered when they have dignity, when they are free from threats of violence, poverty and inequality in relationships. Our transformed structures must open up for true dialogue on the meaning of partnerships in our dealings with each other, whether on the mission of the church, development, trade relations, gender socialization or anything else.

Conclusion

The Jubilee was a decision to return to the origins, when everyone in Israel had his own property and hence his freedom and equality in dignity. It was a reaction against tenureship and poverty. It was a period of social reform which allowed an economic equilibrium, whereby everyone enjoyed at least the minimal economic independence and liberty. **The basis for this is the concept that the land was from God and God had given it to each and every member of his people to their best advantage. Hence none could appropriate the land as personal or hereditary property definitively. For this reason, all buying and selling of land was a temporary transfer and nothing definite.**

The Jubilee Year upholds the following:

a. Dignity of All

This dignity is founded on the creative act of God who made all humanity in God's image and likeness, and gave to all equal rights and duties. None has the right to take advantage and enslave anyone, taking away from him/her the necessities of life. **Another basis is the liberation from the Egyptian slavery and the gift of the land.** Israel had suffered slavery and oppression, but the Lord heard her cries. He came

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Why Silence among the Christians on the Biblical justification of mass murder by the Zionists in Gaza?

Solomon Victus

Introduction: There is an atmosphere of unimaginable silence. Indian Christian believers are perplexed today in taking sides with Palestinians since Biblical scholars and pastors have not taken the issue of the Palestine–Israel war seriously, although war crimes are justified by the Zionist state in the name of the Bible. It has triggered many questions among ordinary Christians who support the state of Israel innocently without knowing the fact that it is committing war crimes.

Are these Christians still maintaining the same Christian understanding of God as it was held by the vengeful Jews during the deportations of early Israelites? Why do most of the Christian theologians and theological seminaries keep themselves silent about this genocide, while a considerable portion of the global Jewish population voices against Zionist annihilation and destruction today? Why not the Old Testament teachers come forward and clear their position on the Zionist Israel, making Indian believers understand how far the claims of modern Zionist Israelis match with the Biblical perspectives? Where do they stand in this brutal genocide in the name of Biblical texts? If we consider the Old Testament interpretation ultimately belongs to the Jewish people, especially Rabbis, what is the role of the Christians who still uphold the OT texts as part of the Bible?

Let us remind ourselves that the Zionist government is not simply fighting with Hamas but with ordinary citizens of Gaza. While Christian Zionists and Christian *Sangis* are vocal all over the world, justifying annihilation and impoverishment done to children and women in Gaza in the name of the Bible and the fulfilment of prophecies, why are theologically qualified Biblical theologians able to be silent spectators? Why this helpless situation? **I was personally disturbed by several questions to define the Biblical God today, especially from the Old Testament point of view.** Does it happen because the Biblical God is listening to the cry of one selected, so-called superior race of the world? Can we claim that God is listening to every cry of the innocent Palestinian children and women where atrocities are committed in Gaza? If so, how will we be able to fight against the current emperors and 'Pharaohs' who exterminate the innocent poor and marginalised migrants

It is very basic Christian theology that the covenant made with Abraham was fulfilled through Christ's sacrifice, and now all of us, the believers in Christ, are the new Israel. That is why we have Galatians 3:28, which says there is neither Jew nor Greek for all are one in Christ Jesus. It is completely ridiculous to try and argue that the state which was founded in 1948 and is mainly comprised of Ashkenazi Jews, is the same Israel with which God made a covenant in the OT.

in our contexts? **Is God of Israel partial and revengeful, and continuing as understood in early periods? Do we still endorse the views of the Psalmist, "Blessed shall s/he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock?" (137:9).**

Zionist position on the land of Gaza today: Apart from the claims of the Zionists, we are all aware that Greater Israel (Israel *Haslema*) is the game of Zionists with sturdy support from Christian Zionists all over the world. When the Zionists still claim that God gave them the land of Gaza, the question naturally arises among us what kind of God they are still holding on to? If God is the giver of land, as we do believe literally, why are there massive landless people on earth? Can we take the Bible as a '*patta*' deed document today in the Indian context? Is it justifiable to claim ancient landmarks and monuments to redesign our borders today according to the words of the scriptures? Is it rational to claim today that the lands were given to them based on the Holy Scriptures? **Do they have a special, exclusive ethnic God for them alone? If they claim like that today, is it not a cheating act of the Israeli people in the name of the biblical God? What does the Bible mean when we read, 'do not misuse the name of God, do not encroach and annexe others' land' in the name of God? When you ask an ordinary Zionist Jew in Israel today whether they believe all humans are equal, they will respond, saying no. They will explain that Jews as the chosen nation. They claim that they were chosen by God. 'They are different. Not all of the human body parts are the same. There is the mind, the heart and the foot. 'This is the nation of the Jews, and Jews should have more rights than no-Jews.' Does it not sound like an Indian casteist justification of Brahminic social hierarchy in terms of body analogy? Does it not sound like taking back temple sites from Muslims, Christians and Buddhists in the name of religious perversion in India?** Norman K Gottwald, a biblical scholar, was trying to disprove through biblical

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references and archaeological evidences and speaking against the justification of violent methods such as invasion used by early Israelites in occupying Canaan.[1] Why? Because for Gottwald the God of Israel cannot be a violent one involving merciless violence, making the Israelites settle down in Canaan and thus a peaceful transition. Nevertheless, the modern Zionist Israelis try to re-establish that the God of Torah is a God of ruthless violence and atrocities, and they justify the current blatant brutalities in Gaza.

Many of the Zionist people trace the conflict to 7th October 2023. It is not so, the real conflict started in 1948 with a forced occupation and evacuation. There were so many bloody wars and expansions with the assistance of European and North American governments. The blood-thirsty current Zionist state of Israel has been using Biblical names for their army operations, for instance, calling 'Operation Gideon Chariot' for the latest operation to destroy the entire Gaza Strip and annihilate Palestinians. **They are using starvation as a political weapon by preventing all humanitarian cargo of food and medicines to Gaza. They were involved in the killing series of doctors and humanitarian staff of the UN. To make war against Iran, they had used the image of a Biblical text and called 'Operation Rising Lion' (Numbers 23:24).** Very often, the Jews had been questioning God's silence during the Holocaust experiences in Europe, but my question here is, can a Jew blame God for the crimes in Gaza? No, because we know such genocides were not caused by God but by fanatic nationalists like Netanyahu and Hitler. **The Zionist leaders today provoke the young army men and women with a zeal for Torah and racial superiority. Is it not a typical religious fundamentalist approach using religion for their selfish political agenda?**

As we are aware, most of the Jews do not accept Jesus as Christ, and I feel nothing wrong with it. It is their freedom to choose their messiah, and there is no compulsion on them to hold that Jesus is Christ. But rather, they are clever to make use of the sympathy of evangelical Christian Zionists conveniently to meet the needs of their political economy of their life in the name of Jesus and Christianity in some way, because Christian pilgrimage and tourism are one of their main sources of income in Israel. On many occasions, they equally hate Christians and Muslims. However, they strategically make use of the United States to further their selfish agenda under the pressure of right-wing Christian tele-evangelical preachers as well as mega Jewish lobby.

Do the Biblical rights have status in justifying the war? Many of us may not know that there are equally strong Christian Zionist alliance and their infrastructure to join hands with the Jewish Zionists. This lobby of the right-wing evangelicals is unimaginably very strong throughout the world. John Hagee, one of the Conservative Evangelist tele-preachers and End of Days theologians in the US, says that the Bible predicted the Israel-Iran War. "The possibility of an all-out war between Iran and Israel is a very real issue. 26 years ago, the headlines in the Bible written by the prophet Ezekiel in chapters 38 and 39 describe the condition of the Middle East right now exactly. The Bible describes a war between Persia, which is Iran, of course and a Russian-led coalition of Anti-Semitic nations that will join forces to destroy Israel."[2] Another Zionist Jew says, 'The year the messiah is coming, the kingdom of Iran and Persia will rise against us, and this is all a sign Messiah is coming... Iran, the threat is unlike any threat we have faced in the history of 6000 years. Every nation has a reason they are afraid of us. Iran is Amalek, and Amalek has to be destroyed before the messiah comes. Moses calls the enemies of the Jews the enemies of God. Whoever hates a Jew hates God.'

The above dispensational position is refuted by renowned intellectuals like Noam Chomsky, a Jew, has said openly, "The Biblical rights which have absolutely no status. None! Nobody in the world can say: 2000 years ago, here is my story of what happened. Therefore, I have the right to do it now. You cannot live in a world like that! Nobody in the world ever makes such a claim! You want to make it okay? And then just admit I am out of the world! I am distinct from the world. Yes, distinct. If you want to play that game, Palestinians have more of a right to claim to be the descendants of the population from 2000 years ago than I do. My ancestors probably came from the Caucasus. Their ancestors came from Palestine. The Cananim were correct about this. So, we don't want to get into that game. Biblical rights have no status."[3]

One of the liberal radical theologians argues against such biblical claims of Zionists, "No, the Bible does not tell us to support Israel. If you have been online recently, you have probably heard people like Charlie Kirk, J.D. Vance and Tim Wall, saying that the Bible tells Christians to support Israel. When they say this, most likely quote the verse that says, 'I will bless those who bless Israel,' but that's a verse from Gen. 12:3 and isn't about the modern day of Israel? **It is very basic Christian theology that the covenant made with Abraham was fulfilled through Christ's sacrifice, and now all of us, the believers in Christ, are the new Israel. That is why we have Galatians 3:28, which says there is neither Jew nor Greek for all are one in Christ Jesus. It is completely ridiculous to try and argue that the state which was founded in 1948, mainly comprised of Ashkenazi Jews, is the same Israel with which God made a covenant in the OT.**

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[1] Refer to Norman K Gottwald, The Tribes of Yahwah, London: SCM Press, 1979.

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[3] Comments by Noam Chomsky, Jewish American Intellectual @BreezyPolitics accessed on 02/06/2025.

To be continued

A Reflection on

ENOUGH

M. J. Joseph

In the Oxford Dictionary, the pronoun **"enough**" is linguistically explained as:

"as much or as many as is necessary or desirable"

And as an adverb it simply means "*to the required degree".*

Yes, it sets a limit to everything, for our wants and needs.

In the animal world, the word has no much meaning as the humans are not too generous to feed them!

In the Swedish language, the word, ***"Lagom"*** carries a wealth of meaning for everyone.

The people of Sweden carry this word in their chest.

So Sweden is known as the happiest nation of the world.

Is it because of their religious faith or their special orientation to life?

The English phrase, **"Oliver Twist asking for more"** speaks of crossing the boundary of one's needs.

Is there is a limit for enough? How much is enough?

In the wilderness, the people of Israel were fed with manna under the divine decree (Ex.16:16-ff).

They were asked to collect only ***"according to the number of the persons"***

Moses was angry for they had violated the divine command.

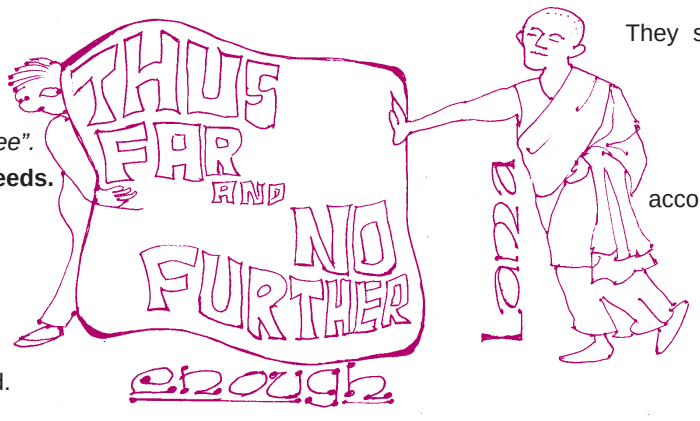
Their attempt was declared futile because of their disobedience.

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught his disciples to ask only for their **daily "bread"**

The Greek word **"*Epiousios"*** in the prayer speaks of the distribution of food materials as ration given to the soldiers of the period.

The creator God is pleased when all of us *receive what is needed,*

It is for setting limit to one's greed, as "we are birds of the same nest".



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They should depend on God's provision for the basic needs and also **to think about other's needs too.**

No hoarding is permitted by the divine decree.

They were asked to pray like this:

Lord, help us to divide the food of the world according to the number of the people in the whole world,

And **give us only our share** of what is required.

Thus word ENOUGH finds a **spiritual dimension** in the Lord's prayer.

It is not found in the dictionary of Wealth,

The rich man wants to become richer

In the Thirukural, we read about the person who wants to have more money is like a man who drinks sea water.

The more he drinks the sea water the more thirsty he becomes.

Just as the Sea water with salt will not quench his thirst, so also is his desire to have more money.

The rich man never asks the question, "how much is enough"?

In the parable of the Rich Farmer, Jesus warns us of the pitfalls of richness.

In the Letter to the Hebrews 13:5, there is a divine mandate **to remain content with what you have.**

In the same vein, in 1 Tim. 6:8, St. Paul reminds the faithful, **to be content with enough food and clothing.**

He reminds the faithful that **the love of money** is the root cause of all evil.

For Paul, contentment is not the statement of accounts but the state of the heart

The Kingdom of God thus becomes a reality in our hearts for common good.

●

young people's column

Young People's Column

The Liberating Christ

young people's column

>>> Contd. from Page 6 Col. 5

like this. Something happened to her. The Greek words (*pneuma echousa astheneias*) could literally read "having a spirit of weakness." Since Luke was a doctor, he should have called the disease by name, but he did not. He just said "an evil spirit", or "a crippling spirit" had made her ill. Jesus said she was bound by "Satan". So, we can agree that while the sickness appeared to be physical, its origin was spiritual. We can only imagine the pain and the humiliating situation this woman was going through. Her illness was not a private affair, everybody could see that she was sick. **During that time the belief of the Jews was that sickness was a sign of punishment from God. That is why the sick were despised and treated as outcasts in the society. This woman knew what the society thought of her, but she also knew and believed that God knew the truth about her. It was for that reason she kept going to the synagogue- a place for the worship of God.**

Further, the status of this human victim, though a woman who might be inferior in the eyes of the society, did not make her less valuable before God. As Bock insightfully states, it is "the issue of inconsistency and priority in creation that Jesus raises."

Jesus released the woman from her ailment by a declaration and he laid hands on her, in a society having no conversation with women in public. The laying on, of hands was normally accompanied by prayer and served as an act of blessing. Her previous condition was completely reversed and she was able to stand erect (anôrthôthç). Her next reaction was to give praises to God for her new condition.

Conclusion

Luke calls the church to claim its identity as a liberating community. Not only to celebrate the Sabbath by a set of rules and regulations, but in the outward manifestation of love and compassion to those in bondage. Some of us are still "crippled," because we have not experienced the church as a place where we are seen, cherished, called, invited, unbound, and released to praise God with our unique stories of healing.

The ethics and sanctity are not violated by acts of liberation. In our modern world, where relationships are defined by rules, the breadth of freedom does not seem too distant from the one that Jesus describes in this passage. He warns the church community to be free from legalistic tendencies and human legislations that are surrounded by religious and social orders. **The church has the responsibility for advocating acts of compassion and liberation.**

The apparent tension in Jesus' preaching about the yet-to-come kingdom of God and the already-here kingdom is like the two sides of the same coin. One implies the other. The eschatological work of Christ and His Spirit necessarily leads all people towards an authentic social and political progress here and now. **The liberating work of the crucified and risen Jesus encompasses not only the ages to come, but also the present human life on earth.**

Gustavo Gutiérrez, a Dominican priest from Peru, is one of the precursors of Liberation Theology. From that perspective, he redefines theology as "a critical reflection on the Church's presence and activity in the world. Theology is reflection, a critical attitude. First comes the commitment to charity, to service. Theology comes 'later.' It comes second. The Church's pastoral action is not arrived at, as a conclusion from theological premises. Theology does not lead to pastoral activity, but is rather a reflection on it.

●

WORDTOON

YEARN
for and
EARN
a good cup of 'T';
and
HEAR
your
HEART
beat happily!

WORDTOON

Jubilee Vision for Social Reconstruction

A Biblical Exploration for Democracy, Justice and Peace

>>> Contd. from Page 2 Col. 4

down to free them and bring them into a vast and beautiful land. The Israelites were a redeemed people who would no longer suffer slavery for ever. The Feast of the Passover was the historical remembrance of this definitive redemption to freedom. The only worthy service of Israel was to render to God the cult and the obedience to His Law. Rather than humiliating them, this service exalted them and raised them as participants in divine dignity. **The weekly institution which recalled this event was the Sabbath, when the Israelite was freed from work, felt free from every human subjection and equal with all others, without an overlord, presenting oneself with dignity before God. In venerating God, humanity exalts itself.**

b. Equality of All

The gift of the Land was made on the basis of equal distribution to the needy of the families on the part of Joshua (Jos 13-21). All had to be made equal; no one should be in need or poor. This was the answer to the promises made to the Patriarchs through an oath made by God (Gen 12-50). The Land was the hereditary gift from God to his people, an inalienable inheritance. None could secure it for oneself through "connections". It is the sole property of God and it serves a strict social function apart from the individual aspect.

The Jubilee Vision
is a call to provide life for all.
This would include both the human and the non-human.
The land, the poor, the slave,
and the ones in debt -
all are to enjoy a life in all its fullness.

The Prophets condemned self-gain and tenureship, which was necessarily linked to the monarchy as the cruellest form of injustice. But the monarchy was nevertheless strongly desired by the people despite the warnings of Samuel (1 Sam 8:10-22). **Perhaps, it was then that the Jubilee year effectively died out.**

The Jubilee year was created to restore this original equilibrium of property as willed by God. Everyone had to feel as brothers and sisters with a strong sense of mutual reciprocity. To this sense of equality was linked also the respect for the Land. One should not exploit the Land indiscriminately, such that it becomes irreparably impoverished to the detriment of everyone.

c. Life for All

The Jubilee Vision is a call to provide life for all. This would include both the human and the non-human. The land, the poor, the slave, and the ones in debt - all are to enjoy a life in all its fullness.

For truly *"sounding the trumpets and proclaiming Jubilee"* in our times, we must face the two great threats to life that all humankind must resolve if our descendants and the biosphere are to survive. A first step is an awareness of the current global economic order, which is concentrating wealth in a few and increasing poverty as never before in human history. This is what the Biblical Jubilee was concerned about. The second step involves a response to the destruction of the biosphere, something that has only become a problem during the last several years of industrialization, and this must be resolved in the coming years.

As people of faith, our task is to reconnect with the scriptural paradigms like that of the Sabbath Day, the Sabbath Year, and the Jubilee Year. All three speak of justice that includes rest for the land and those who work in the land, for animals and even for the wild beasts. Concern for our environment cannot be divorced from our economic concerns, for it is the omnipresent drive for profit that continues to propel us all toward the precipice of ecological collapse. The ecological and economic changes necessary for the continuation of life on this planet will ultimately require a powerful spiritual vision such as the Biblical Jubilee. In essence, the "Jubilee Vision" presents a radical blueprint for a society characterized by fairness, compassion, and shared prosperity, offering enduring principles for building a more just, democratic and peaceful world.

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As Gaza faces starvation

global religious voices call for immediate aid and respect for human life

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humanitarian situation in Gaza, where the civilian population was being crushed by hunger and continues to be exposed to violence and death. Pope Leo said, "Every human being has an intrinsic dignity bestowed by God Himself. I urge all parties in every conflict to recognise this dignity and to cease all actions that violate it."

In a joint press conference held on 22 July in Jerusalem, His Beatitude Theophilos III, Patriarch of Jerusalem, and His Beatitude Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, delivered a pastoral and humanitarian testimony after their visit to Gaza, where they had witnessed firsthand the immense suffering endured by its people under bombardment, siege, and deprivation.

In his address, Patriarch Theophilos III described Gaza as "a land pierced by the wounds of war, where the innocent bleed beneath the weight of a merciless assault."

ACT Alliance general secretary Rudelmar Bueno de Faria said,
"The starvation in Gaza is a deep wound on the conscience of humanity.
Turning humanitarian aid into a weapon of war is a grave violation of international law and human dignity. People of faith cannot remain silent in the face of such suffering.
We call for an immediate ceasefire, full and sustained humanitarian access,
and an end to the siege that is suffocating
millions of innocent lives."

Patriarchs Theophilos III and Pizzaballa underscored that the ongoing destruction in Gaza is a humanitarian and moral catastrophe that cannot be ignored.

Rev. Prof. Michel Abs, secretary general of the Middle East Council of Churches, expressed his feelings through a poem, which read, in part:

From beneath the rubble, we call to you.

From the heart of tragedy, we cry out. We are the children of Palestine, the people of Gaza, abandoned by all the nations of the world, betrayed by governments that defied their own people who stood in solidarity with us.

On 19 July, the Muslim Council of Elders, led by His Eminence Dr. Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar, condemned Israeli attacks, which violate international laws, warning of the worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

ACT Alliance general secretary Rudelmar Bueno de Faria said, "The starvation in Gaza is a deep wound on the conscience of humanity. Turning humanitarian aid into a weapon of war is a grave violation of international law and human dignity. People of faith cannot remain silent in the face of such suffering. We call for an immediate ceasefire, full and sustained humanitarian access, and an end to the siege that is suffocating millions of innocent lives."

The Lutheran World Federation general secretary Rev. Dr Anne Burghardt expressed deep concern. "We cannot look away as children are starving and people are unable to safely collect water from aid points," she said. "Our humanitarian colleagues are suffering alongside the rest of the population."

Many of them are hungry, exhausted, and struggling to carry out their duties to care for others, explained Burghardt. "One of them told us: 'We see the toll in each other's faces – our bodies thinning day by day since the ceasefire collapsed. The hunger is no longer invisible,' " Burghardt said. "We reiterate our call for an end to the conflict and unhindered access for those seeking to alleviate the suffering in Gaza."

Health consultant Dr Bassam Abu Hamad, who has worked with health units in Gaza operated by the Middle East Council of Churches Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees, shared what he sees on the streets of Gaza every day.

"I am seeing on the streets of Gaza people who look thin," he said. "The majority of people have lost weight."

He estimates 40 percent of people in Gaza have lost a significant amount of their body weight.

"I see people looking for food, wondering when this terrible situation will end," he said. "Reports from the field reveal that acute malnutrition

– WCC News

Young People's Column

The Liberating Christ

Lijo David

God, the giver of liberation, delivers men and women from slavery and the yoke of weaknesses. The Liberation Theology believes that the liberation which God gives is not only spiritual but, as seen in the Bible, it is physical, mental, social, economic and political. The liberation theology has been very much influenced by the writings of the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez through his book named 'The Theology of Liberation'. This new theological approach is based on the teachings of Christ.

Luke 13: 10-17:

Jesus has played multiple roles throughout the four Gospels, such as Christ-the teacher, Christ-the healer, Christ-the suffering servant. All these roles are extremely important for understanding the nature of God. There are many forms of bondage everywhere in the world. There are different forms of structural systems which enslave the people. Any form of bondage whether it is personal or structural is sin. Many are knowingly or unknowingly living in bondage without feeling the need for deliverance. The gospel is the proclamation of the freedom from the bondage of sin.

God, the giver of liberation, delivers men and women from slavery and the yoke of weaknesses. The Liberation Theology believes that the liberation which God gives is not only spiritual but, as seen in the Bible, it is physical, mental, social, economic and political. The liberation theology has been very much influenced by the writings of the Peruvian priest Gustavo Gutiérrez through his book named 'The Theology of Liberation'. This new theological approach is based on the teachings of Christ, that expressed liberation as the relief from the unjust economic, social and political suppressions. This Liberation Theology which emerged in the Catholic Church in Latin America during the 1950s finally became international and inter-denominational. We hope that God who sees our difficulties and hears our prayers, will deliver us from slavery and the yoke of all kinds of bondages.

Naming Jesus "the Liberator" is practically synonymous with naming him "Saviour," "Redeemer," and "Deliverer." Eben H. Scheffler, a South African theologian, also extracts from the Gospel of Luke an image of Jesus as the saviour or liberator for various kinds of human sufferings: political, economic, social, psychological, physical, and spiritual. According to him, "Jesus himself also suffered on these different levels of life and is also ultimately exalted after the humiliation of his death." Luke links the anointing of Jesus with his liberation ministry in Luke 4:16-21. **These verses highlight Jesus' power to deliver and release those who are poor, oppressed, handicapped or have fallen under the control of the devil.**

The liberating work of the crucified and risen Jesus in today's gospel portion can be viewed from four angles.

1. Liberation from Residing Power Structures

Luke 13:10-17 falls within the central section of the Gospel According To Luke, called the Travel Narrative (9:51-19:48). The motif of this section is to affirm "the coming of salvation in all its fullness to all people."

In Luke 13:10-17, Jesus is found in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. This episode is also the final of the four Sabbath synagogue appearances of Jesus in Luke (4: 16, 33; 6:6; 13:10), with the last three focusing on healing narratives. In both the first and the last synagogue appearances, however, the Jewish leaders were hardened to Jesus' ministry.

On this particular Sabbath, Jesus was teaching in the synagogue. While teaching there, Jesus noticed a sick woman who had been bound for eighteen years.

Luke locates this woman in the synagogue on the Sabbath, in a culture where women were considered to have less value than men, and did not always have equal religious or social access. Wayne Meeks in his book, "From Maccabees to the Mishnah", says that the Jewish worship in Jesus' time was centred at the Temple in Jerusalem, the synagogues were built as simple structures, mostly with muddy floor and thatched roofs. They were built in two levels. The lower level was an open space with no benches or seats, where women and children sat on the floor. Then two or three steps higher there was an upper level. There were three sides to the upper level - the front and the two sides had benches made of wood or stones where men sat. At the centre of the upper level

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was the seat of Moses, where the preacher/ teacher sat when preaching or praying. Many a time women could not hear what was said in the front as they were far removed from the seat of Moses. So, it was from that seat at the centre of the upper level, that Jesus saw the woman. That woman was so out of shape, no one could miss her. **It was Jesus' style to focus his eyes on those in the periphery. Jesus stopped in the middle of a sermon and 'called her near', the woman from the lower level to the upper level. Everybody thought. "No! that is the men's level, no woman should go there! He talked to her in front of everybody! "Woman, you are released from your illness".** However, in that setting, it was not customary for a woman to approach a Rabbi. Neither was it appropriate for a Rabbi to speak to women publicly (John 4:27). Similarly the incident of the woman of Samaria at Jacob's well (John 4:7). **Jesus took the initiative, inviting the sick woman forward to give her a location of centrality. According to the text, the woman didn't ask Jesus for help when she appeared in the synagogue on the particular Sabbath day. He was teaching most likely surrounded by a crowd. She did not approach him. Jesus did not stop talking to her. He touched her. When he touched her, Luke says, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God.**

2. Liberation through Restoring Dignity

In the synagogue of Nazareth, Jesus announced his messianic mission to 'set the oppressed free' (4:18). Now, in a synagogue, at the heart of Luke's central section, Jesus frees a "daughter of Abraham" from satanic bondage (v.16).

The healing of the woman by laying his hands on her affirmed her dignity. For the first time in eighteen years, her dignity was restored and the stigma and the blame associated with her prior condition were removed from her. The term translated "weakness" (astheneia) can simply mean "illness". The story suggests that the woman's condition may be seen as indicative of her diminished status as a woman. Her condition was attributed to "a spirit of weakness, that weakness left her bent over and unable to stand straight, Jesus addressesd her with the general term "Woman," In the end, Jesus conferred on the woman a status of dignity. She was a "daughter of Abraham".

Jesus is in the process of releasing the captive, freeing the oppressed (4:18), and raising up the children of Abraham (3:8). **This scene points to a new status for women in the kingdom of God.**

3. Liberation from Revolutionary Religious Orders

Jesus interacted with the leader of the synagogue rather than with the woman. The leader was angry at the action of Jesus for supposedly breaking the Sabbath and he wanted to make an issue about Jesus' violation of the Sabbath. The leader of the synagogue addressed the crowd, declared that there were six days in which they could come to be healed, but should not do it on the Sabbath. His concern was for the Sabbath law. He took his role as maintaining proper observance of the Sabbath rather than celebrating the release of the woman from her "weakness." **By his action the religious leader ignored the pain of that woman who endured for eighteen long years. He disregarded the liberation that had come to the woman through the ministry of Jesus. This religious leader seems to have been more concerned about the invasion of his religious space and the inappropriateness of the miracle of Jesus on the Sabbath!**

Jesus' act of healing was in harmony with the principles of the Sabbath; and release from the bondage of Satan was consistent with the eschatological redemption that Jesus provided and to which he hinted in his programmatic declaration in Luke 4:18, 19. **The redemptive and liberating work on Sabbath is "the symbol of the refreshment and restoration of life." It is thus consistent with God's intentions for the day to bring healing to the sick and show compassion to those in bondage.**

Jesus appeared as an authoritative expositor of the Law. He declared that the woman was worth more than an ox or an ass. Religious leaders permitted watering of their animals. The woman was entitled to more consideration than an animal. Jesus answered the leader of the synagogue by contrasting what one would do for an animal with what he had done for the woman.

Jesus as a person with spiritual authority rejected traditional interpretations and defined himself appropriate to Sabbath behaviour. In this vein, it may well be noted that the deed of compassion does not empty the Sabbath of holiness; rather, compassionate acts are consistent with the holiness of the Sabbath. **The Sabbath is a time that celebrates God's mercy and God's liberation from bondage.**

4. Liberation from Rejecting Social Orders

As usual in Biblical stories, no details are given about the woman in the story, no name. Luke tells us that she was 'bent over'- she could not stand straight. She had not been born

Contd. Page 4 Col. 1 ..>>>

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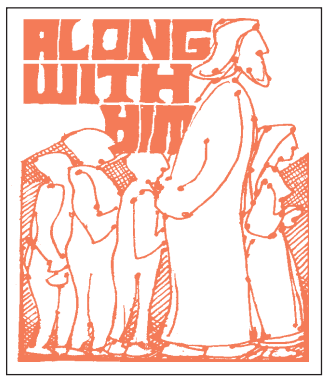

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Mammen Varkey

"Afterward he appeared to the eleven themselves as they sat at the table; and he upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who saw him after he had risen. And he said to them, "Go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation……" So when the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went forth and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that attended it." Mark 16:14-20 (RSV)

The Risen Lord told the eleven, "And these signs will accompany those who believe (in the gospel). In my name they will cast out demons." Further, he said, "…they will speak in new tongues." Mark 16: 17.

This is one of the most inadequately understood statements of Jesus.

To establish communication with those who would not have been reached otherwise

On the day of Pentecost when the disciples and the other believers were "all together in one place, they were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterances." **Acts 2: 3,4.** The result of the utterances that came out from them, because of the indwelling of the Spirit in them, is that, *"Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphilia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians, we hear them telling, in our own tongues, the mighty works of God." Acts 2: 9-11.*

This event makes it very clear, and declares adequately and powerfully, that the purpose of 'speaking in other tongues' is to make it possible for people speaking 'other languages' to understand 'the mighty works of God'.

People hailing from radically different contexts and circumstances also need to have 'languages' different from the prevalent, dominant language, for hearing about, and understanding, 'the mighty works of God', to understand the Gospel, the redemptive work of the Parent God for the children.

'Speaking in new tongues' is, definitely, for establishing communication with those people who would not have been, otherwise, 'reached' or 'spoken to'. The 'Indwelling of the Spirit' and the resultant 'speaking in tongues' enable us to establish communication with such people.

If there is no one to interpret, keep silence

The common understanding of 'speaking in new tongues' will have to be put against St. Paul's very clear words in his Letter to Corinthians. He writes, "Let all things be done for edification. If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three and each in turn; and let one interpret. But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them **keep silence in church** and speak to himself and to God." 1 Corinthians 14: 27, 28. **"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace."**

Two examples of 'speaking in new tongues'

1. It would be worth noticing two examples of '**speaking in new tongues'** from the lives of the early Christians. "… they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness. Now the company of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common." Acts 4: 31, 32.

The refusal to speak about one's possession was, definitely, an unparalleled example of 'speaking in a new tongue'. Are we willing to speak in 'new tongue'? Do we commit ourselves 'to speak in new tongues?

2. Another example from the lives of early Christians is narrated in The Acts of the Apostles. "… he, full of the Holy Spirit, … said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God…. **And as they were stoning Stephen …., (he) cried with a loud voice. "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Acts 7: 54-60.**

It is a magnificent example of 'speaking in a new tongue.' Stephen forgave and prayed for those who stoned at, and killed him. That is truly a new language.

The indwelling of the Spirit inspires, strengthens and even compels us *'to speak in new tongues'* and to refuse to speak the 'tongue', the language, of this world. ●

To be continued

In the next issue

Who are the believers "in my name"?

Post - Easter Reflections - 8

Discipleship is the commitment to 'speak in new tongues'

LAMP UNTO THE FEET, LIGHT UNTO THE PATH

Let Us Be Aware Of Our True Worth

A. V. Itty

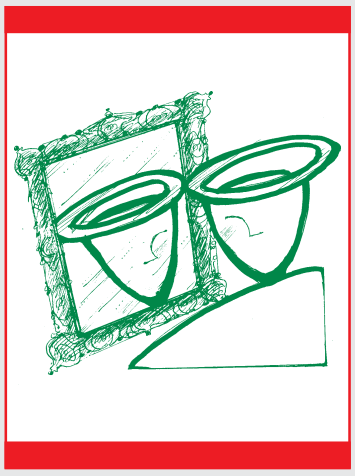
Gen. 1:24-31

"Then God said: "And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us.....

So God created human beings, making them to be like himself. He created them male and female and blessed them."

Antonio Rossini who lived in Italy in the 18th century was a well-known singer and theatrical personality. Once the king there, wanted to honour Rossini. So he invited him to the palace and gifted a precious watch to him. He considered it as a precious memento and preserved it very carefully. Once Rossini showed it to a friend who visited him. After keenly observing the watch for some time , he told Rossini: "You might not be aware of the real worth of this watch". Saying this, he pressed a button at the rear of the watch and opened a secret chamber behind and showed it to him. Rossini was astonished to see the King's picture elegantly engraved there. That was a more valuable gift from the king to him, than the watch itself. But Rossini couldn't recognise it till that time, as he had seen only the outside, not the inside!

Such is the case with us, the human beings as well. We have not been able to see the elegant picture within us. God has engraved His own image in everyone of us (Gen. 1:26,27). But, most of us have not been able to recognise it. We are all very precious and special because God lives in us and we carry His image and likeness within us.



In the Scripture portion we are meditating upon, we are reminded of our true worth by the Genesis writer. We bear God's own image and likeness. That is why Jesus told us that we are more precious than the whole world (Mk. 8:36). **Let us be really grateful to God for our precious lives and live our lives the way He wants us to live.**

May God help. ●

Prof. A. V. Itty, former Professor of English at Bishop Moore College, Mavelikara, is, now, engaged in the Evangelical, and Educational Ministry undertaken by ADORE in the Rayagada Dist. of Odisha.
94950 17850 (Mob)

Food For Thought:

Every human life is like a treasure hidden in the field!

WORDTOON

YEAH!
'U'
should never
HURT
any
HEART

WORDTOON

World Council of Religions for Peace

Interreligious dialogue is not a luxury but an inexorable necessity

>>> Contd. from Page 1 Col. 1

ascend to that height where the light of truth is seen, unless the dead and earthly garment of skins is stripped away from the foundations of the soul… This is truly that which really exists, and the understanding of this is the knowledge of truth."

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew described the consequences of this worldview as deeply existential and social. He asserted that interreligious dialogue is not a luxury but "an inexorable necessity, an act of collective resistance" against the fragmentation of meaning in the modern world.

The Ecumenical Patriarch stressed the importance of bridging faith and science, drawing on quantum mechanics and biology to challenge mechanistic views and invite a "new natural philosophy" harmonizing scientific and spiritual quests.

Addressing two urgent global crises—the debt crisis and the rise of artificial intelligence—he highlighted their common root in materialistic abstraction and utility. The debt crisis enslaves nations and denies human dignity, while artificial intelligence risks reducing humanity to data, threatening freedom and creativity.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew emphasized the need for religious communities to offer positive alternatives: solidarity and justice against economic abstraction, and the defense of human dignity against technological reductionism. He called for an ethics of technology based on compassion, responsibility, and respect.

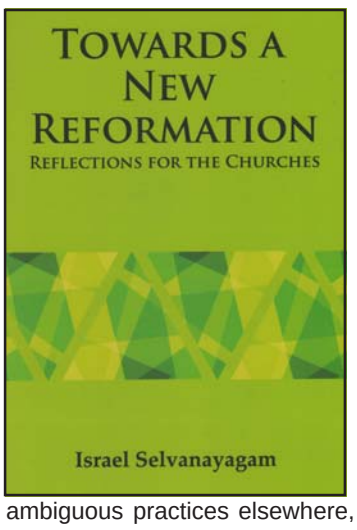
"We meet in essence not when our theologies coincide, but when our communities share bread with the hungry, care for the sick, defend the wronged. Unity is forged in the common resistance to the forces that attempt to efface the human face."

The Ecumenical Patriarch concluded with a call to action: "We are not called to compose a new global religion of consensus. We are called, each from the standpoint of his faith, to constitute a global alliance of conscience, a prophetic testimony that will keep open the horizon of transcendence in a world threatened with asphyxiation within the confines of the material."

– WCRP News

Towards A New Reformation

Israel Selvanayagam



The major Reformation in Europe in the 16th century represented the combination of preceding renaissance, small movements of protest and new initiatives of a group of reformers. But the result was not only a critical thinking and new structures but also divisions and violence. The ecumenical movement of the 20th century continues to struggle for not only shared visions and resources but the earlier call for reunification of the church still unfulfilled. And the fast decline of the church in the West and confused identities and ambiguous practices elsewhere, call for a new reformation. This book, sharing the view of many, without dictating a particular course of action, presents a set of reflections, shared and shaped over the years.

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The Rev. Dr. Israel Selvanayagam, a retired presbyter from the Church of South India, was in the ministry of teaching, administering and practising interreligious dialogue for more than fifty years both in India and the United Kingdom. He has published extensively both in Tamil and English. Christian World Imprints have had the privilege of publishing many of his books, the last one being Reading the Bible with Passion and Engagement: Notes for 100 Bible Studies, 2023.

CHEER CHAT

A good laugh heals a lot of hurts.

– Madeline L'engle

Asia - Pacific Theological Union (APTU)

Launch of International Ph.D. Program in August 2026

M. P. Joseph

The Asia-Pacific Theological Union (APTU)—an inter-regional consortium uniting national consortia of graduate theological institutions across Asia—will launch its International Ph.D. Program in August 2026.

This initiative reflects APTU's commitment to developing contextual methodologies that foster the growth of Asia-Pacific theologies. The programme aims to empower theologians from across the region to articulate their faith experiences in ways that are deeply rooted in their distinct cultural, social, and historical contexts. By cultivating a theologically grounded and contextually relevant tradition, APTU seeks to bring forward the often-silenced voices and theological imaginations of colonized and marginalized communities within the global theological discourse.

In this spirit, APTU will encourage bold and prophetic theological responses to the living presence of the Divine - especially as encountered among excluded communities and the suffering earth. This theological pursuit demands continuous critical engagement with sacred texts, their diverse interpretations, and their embodiment in specific socio-political and cultural realities.

Comprising a rich and diverse network of theological institutes with deep legacies in both formal and informal theological education and research, APTU fosters solidarity and collaboration at the grassroots level through its national and regional consortia. This cooperative model empowers member institutions to address the complex theological and pastoral challenges of the rapidly expanding Christian communities throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

The Ph.D. curriculum is carefully designed to cultivate a new generation of theological leaders who are equipped to engage with the complexities of the Asia-Pacific context and to contribute meaningfully toward building a more just and compassionate society. The consortium model enables participating institutions to pool their academic expertise and institutional resources to create a rigorous and well-rounded doctoral program that draws on the distinctive strengths of each member school.

This approach facilitates a vibrant exchange of ideas, pedagogical best practices, and cultural insights, fostering a transformative learning environment for both students and faculty. Graduate students will have the privilege of working with a diverse and distinguished pool of scholars from across the Asia-Pacific and around the world.

APTU remains firmly committed to supporting theological institutions, churches, and civil society across the Asia-Pacific region in their pursuit of critical, contextually rooted theological scholarship. Its ultimate goal is to inspire and equip future theologians and religious leaders to become agents of transformative change — shaping theological discourse through their deep commitment to justice, compassion, and service.

Initially, the program will be guided by a committee composed of: Prof. Huang Po Ho, Taiwan (Chair, Governing Board); Prof. Izak Lattu, Indonesia (Vice Chair); Prof. Frank Hernando, Philippines (Treasurer); Prof. Wati Longchar, USA/India; Prof. Lahpai Sengsan, Myanmar; Prof. John Selvamani, Taiwan; and Prof. M. P. Joseph, India (Dean).

The Ph.D. degree will be conferred by the Inter-regional Board of the Asia-Pacific Theological Union, based on the recommendation of the Interregional Senate. The program will be delivered through collaborative supervision involving local centers of theological education within the APTU consortium; national consortia of APTU-affiliated institutions and an international network of scholars in theology and related disciplines

Together, these bodies will support the academic formation of scholars committed to socially engaged and transformative theology. An International Senate will oversee academic administration and ensure the highest standards of theological research and scholarship.

Prospective candidates are invited to contact the Dean of APTU or the national consortia in the Philippines, Myanmar, Indonesia, or Taiwan for details regarding the application process and graduation requirements.

For details, please write to: dean.aptu@gmail.com

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A FORUM OF CURRENT AFFAIRS

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